

**Report of the
Accreditation Visiting Team**

**Albert R. Lyman Middle School
535 North 100 East
Blanding, Utah 84511**

March 1-2, 2005



Utah State Office of Education
250 East 500 South
P.O. Box 144200
Salt Lake City, Utah 84114-4200

**THE REPORT OF THE
VISITING TEAM REVIEWING**

**Albert R. Lyman Middle School
535 North 100 East
Blanding, Utah 84511**

March 1-2, 2005

UTAH STATE OFFICE OF EDUCATION

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State Superintendent of Public Instruction**

**DIVISION OF
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Salt Lake City, Utah

TABLE OF CONTENTS

| | |
|--|-----|
| Foreword..... | ii |
| Utah State Board of Education | iii |
| San Juan School District Board of Education and District Administration..... | 1 |
| Albert R. Lyman Middle School Administration and Staff..... | 2 |
| Albert R. Lyman Middle School Mission Statement and Belief Statements..... | 3 |
| Members of the Visiting Team | 4 |
| Visiting Team Report..... | 5 |
| Chapter 1: School Profile..... | 5 |
| Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry..... | 6 |
| Chapter 2: The Self-Study Process | 6 |
| Chapter 3: Instructional and Organizational Effectiveness | 8 |
| Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals | 8 |
| Curriculum Development..... | 9 |
| Quality Instructional Design | 10 |
| Quality Assessment Systems | 11 |
| Leadership for School Improvement | 12 |
| Community Building | 14 |
| Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning..... | 15 |
| Chapter 4: Northwest Association of Accredited Schools (NAAS) Standards I-XI | 16 |
| Chapter 5: School Improvement Efforts – Action Plan | 17 |
| Chapter 6: Major Commendations and Recommendations of the Visiting Team | 18 |

FOREWORD

The major purpose of the accreditation process is to stimulate school growth and improvement so as to increase student achievement.

In these efforts, the school staff makes a comprehensive evaluation of the school's programs, operations, and results. The school determines how actual practices align to stated objectives and resulting outcomes. It is a three-phased evaluation: (1) self-evaluation, (2) on-site evaluation by an external team of educators, and (3) implementation using units of the evaluation to improve the school by effecting thoughtful change.

The evaluation, March 1-2, 2005, was conducted because of the school's desire to ensure quality education for all students in the school, and to increase student achievement.

The entire staff of Albert R. Lyman Middle School is commended for the time and effort devoted to studying and evaluating the various facets of the total program and to preparing the materials used by the visiting team. The excellent leadership given by Principal Doris M. Jones is also commended.

The staff and administration are congratulated for their desire for excellence at Albert R. Lyman Middle School, and also for the professional attitude of all members of the group, which made it possible for them to see areas of weakness and strength and to suggest procedures for bringing about improvements.

While these recommendations may be used to solicit financial support to acquire some of the materials, equipment, and services needed to carry out a more effective program, it is even more important that the faculty and administration utilize them as they continue to evaluate and modify course offerings and administrative and classroom procedures to more dramatically increase student achievement at Albert R. Lyman Middle School.

Patti Harrington, Ed.D.
State Superintendent
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ALBERT R. LYMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

ADMINISTRATION AND STAFF

School Administration

Doris Jones..... Principal
Chas DeWitt..... Assistant Principal

Counseling

Mary Ann Pugh..... Counselor
Kline Carroll Counselor
Marsha Perry Intervention Specialist

Support Staff

| | | |
|------------------|-----------------------|----------------|
| Lula Atcitty | Victoria Greymountain | Hollie Sanford |
| Genevieve Atene | Robert Hannahs | Tessa Steve |
| Terry Benally | Maryann Hatathalie | Mable Yazzie |
| Betty Blackhorse | Jane Jones | |
| Betty Earley | Denice Meyers | |

Faculty

| | | |
|-------------------|---------------------|---------------|
| Kristin Black | Merrilynn Lundahl | John Sanford |
| Mike Bowers | Norman Lyman | Becky Strong |
| Mark Christiansen | Elizabeth McPherson | J.J. Squires |
| Sara Faust | Sonja Mills | Brady Tanner |
| James Hughes | Rich Monson | Mary Thornton |
| Buckley Jensen | Shane Musselman | |
| Helen Lake | Maryann Pugh | |

ALBERT R. LYMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

MISSION STATEMENT

Accountability, Respect, Literacy
and best effort promote our life-long success.

BELIEF STATEMENTS

We believe successful learning occurs when education is a shared responsibility of students, parents, community members and educators at all levels.

We believe regular attendance, discipline, order, and a safe environment are essential elements of the learning community.

We believe all people benefit from commitment, working hard, persistence and integrity; the pursuit of dreams, hopes, passions, joys, and laughter are essential elements of rich meaningful learning throughout our lives.

We believe appropriate student assessment recognizes differences in ability, learning styles, background, culture and language.

We believe through active engagement students should be provided an opportunity to develop proficiency in academic, social, and technical skills in preparation for future education and career experiences.

We believe students should be provided an opportunity to develop a value system that includes trustworthiness, respect, responsibility, fairness, caring, and citizenship.

We believe the state core should be the basis for all instruction across the curriculum.

MEMBERS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Andrew Odoardi, The Madeleine Choir School, Visiting Team Chairperson

Tom Brown, Grand County High School, Grand County School District

Ross Poore, North Layton Junior High School, Davis County School District

Melinda Snow, Grand County Middle School, Grand County School District

VISITING TEAM REPORT
ALBERT R. LYMAN MIDDLE SCHOOL

CHAPTER 1: SCHOOL PROFILE

Albert R. Lyman Middle School is located in a rural setting in Blanding, San Juan County, Utah. Lyman Middle School made the transition from a junior high to middle school in 1986. The final review of the mission statement was conducted during the summer prior to the 2004-05 school year.

The school has an enrollment of approximately 325 students. The school is comprised of an ethnically diverse student body, with approximately 50 percent of the students representing the Native American culture, primarily Navajo and Ute. Approximately 49 percent of the student body is Caucasian. The school has 22.6 percent of its students meeting the federal definition of homeless; 69 percent of the students receive free/reduced-price lunch.

Albert R. Lyman Middle School applied and was accepted as a candidate for accreditation by the Northwest Association of Accredited School (NAAS) for the 2001-02 school year. This on-site visit completes the requirements for full accreditation by NAAS.

a) What significant findings were revealed by the school's analysis of its profile?

The school has a high attendance rate, but there is a significant academic performance gap between the Caucasian and Native American populations. On the ITBS Results for fall 2004 this performance gap is quite prominent. The Caucasian students' performance band in the core subjects ranged from the 50th to the 70th percentile. The Native American students' performance band in the core subjects ranged from a low below the 10th percentile for some Ute students to a high at the 35th percentile. Safe school infractions have declined dramatically during the past four years.

While there was significant data provided in the profile, there was no discussion, analysis, or conclusion drawn from the profile data. Questions central to the profile that should be asked, reviewed, and analyzed include, "What does your profile data at Albert R. Lyman Middle School tell you? What additional questions does it generate?"

b) What modifications to the school profile should the school consider for the future?

A number of additions to the school profile could prove useful. For example: (1) student GPA by core content area, GPA data for the entire school, and the GPA data provided by individual ethnic groups; (2) the number of students served in special

education and their service patterns; (3) the number of students served with 504 plans; (4) the number of students served in the ESL program, and the service pattern for these students; and (5) an explanation for the large homeless population. How are students classified? How are they being served? While there was data provided concerning safe school infractions, a staff member estimates that 90 percent of discipline referrals to the office involved Native American students. How is this issue being addressed? What are the implications for the school?

Although there was an introduction provided, it focused primarily on the process. It would be useful to provide a narrative to complement the data provided in order to provide general information as to the nature of the community, etc.

Suggested Areas for Further Inquiry:

- Patterns of attendance, truancy, suspension, and student mobility need to be addressed. Additionally, the Visiting Team suggests further profiling for subgroups:
 - Special education students (numbers and service patterns/inclusion, etc.)
 - ESL population (service pattern, ESL-endorsed teachers, who administers testing, etc.)
 - Three-year comparison regarding subgroup academic and language growth
 - Explanation of homeless population
 - Discipline information: breakdown of ethnic groups and offenses
 - School-wide GPA in all subject areas
 - Percentage of students enrolled by program or course title
 - Dropout patterns and referrals to alternative programs
 - Patterns of performance on standardized testing based on gender, ethnicity, and grade level

CHAPTER 2: THE SELF-STUDY PROCESS

- a) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

According to the report, all the teachers and administrators were involved in the self-study. Focus groups were identified, as well as subcommittees of the steering committee for the purposes of organizing, conducting, and developing the self-study. The focus group leaders provided direction and guidance to the process. Each group had interdepartmental representation as well as parents and students. In addition, each department met to identify how it linked its efforts to the desired results for student learning (DRSLs) and to cite areas of strength and weaknesses. A series of regular meetings were held with parents and students for input into the development of the DRSLs.

- b) *To what extent does the school's self-study accurately reflect the school's current strengths and limitations?*

The work done in the departments shows a thorough, critical, clear, and significant effort to identify areas of strength and limitations. However, the individual departmental analyses need to be integrated into a broader, school-wide set of strengths and limitations tied to the DRSLs and find expression in the action plans. Secondly, while the departments linked their work to the desired results for student learning, they should address how they assessed the degree of student accomplishment relative to the desired learner outcomes, and they should describe the varieties of assessment, with examples of how the results would drive or modify subsequent instruction. With many of the departments, weaknesses were tied to factors that are organizational, not instructional.

From interviews with teachers, parents and students, it was clear that they had questions about the purpose of the self-study and the processes involved, as well as how the DRSLs and action plans will drive the work of the school over the next several years. There is work to be done on the part of the leadership team to ensure that the community stakeholders clearly understand the nature of how the DRSLs are tied to “what the students should know and be able to do.”

It is important to note that much of the data analyses and description of school practices and programs was embedded in the focus group reports. Both the departmental analyses and the focus group analyses provide a clear sense of the schools’ working knowledge about the directions to follow for continuing school improvement efforts in fostering student learning.

The school also gathered stakeholder perception data via ISQ surveys of parents, staff, teachers, and students. Analysis of the results reveals that the majority of students and parents feel that the staff, counselors, and administrators are doing a good job.

The staff is committed to continuing its efforts to improve both parent and student satisfaction levels in all of the survey areas. The administration and staff are to be commended for their continuing efforts to maintain communication among all stakeholders.

The Visiting Team recognizes that the school and leadership team made a sincere effort to do a thorough analysis of the school’s strengths and limitations, and commends them for this effort. Their attention to the language of the self-study process is exemplary.

CHAPTER 3: INSTRUCTIONAL AND ORGANIZATIONAL EFFECTIVENESS

Albert R. Lyman's Middle School's desired results for student learning are as follows:

1. Students enjoy reading and can read at the appropriate grade level.
2. Students demonstrate critical thinking, problem solving, and decision-making across the curriculum and in daily life.
3. Students will be responsible, tolerant and productive members of society.
4. Students will be self-directed life-long learners.
5. Students will have appropriate verbal and written communication skills.
6. Students will be prepared to develop and explore future educational and job opportunities.

Shared Vision, Beliefs, Mission, and Goals:

- a) *To what extent did the school facilitate a collaborative process to build a shared vision for the school (mission) that defines a compelling purpose and direction for the school?*

The interviews with staff and students affirmed that the administration and leadership team assumed the primary responsibility for developing the school's beliefs and mission statements. Other stakeholders, such as teachers, parents, and community members had systematic and ongoing opportunities to provide input and feedback through the consensus-building process to define the school's mission. The Visiting Team suggests more fully including students in the processes.

There was a very concerted and enthusiastic effort to involve all stakeholders in using the mission and belief statements in decisions pertaining to school culture, classroom instruction, and the development of the DRSLs.

- b) *To what extent has the school defined a set of beliefs that reflect the commitment of the administration and staff to support student achievement and success?*

The belief statements clearly reflect the commitment of the school to support student achievement and success.

- c) *To what extent do the school's mission and beliefs align to support the school's desired results for student learning (DRSLs)?*

The desired results for student learning (DRSLs) were identified through a process that included teacher, parent, and student input as well as the analysis of student performance results. The Visiting Team applauds the efforts of the school

leadership team in targeting lifelong learning, communication, and higher-order thinking skills as a focus for student achievement.

Throughout the narratives of the departmental analyses and focus groups, there is clear evidence of attention to the issue of alignment of curriculum, instruction, and the DRSLs with the mission and belief statements.

The Visiting Team recommends that the staff and stakeholders revisit the DRSLs in order to increase levels of commitment among the staff and identify measurable indicators to monitor and measure student achievement of the DRSLs.

Curriculum Development:

- a) *To what extent does the staff work collaboratively to ensure the curriculum is based on clearly defined standards and the Utah Core Curriculum (with inclusion of the Utah Life Skills)?*

It was very apparent that collaboration has been done within each department to ensure that the State Core Curriculum is being addressed in the school's curriculum. Cross-curricular projects have been and are being developed in order for students to apply their knowledge in real-world situations.

It is recommended that the school's staff members increase their interdepartmental collaboration in order to work more closely with one another, and integrate subject matter to ensure that the learning by students is meaningful and that students are able to apply their skills and knowledge toward the numerous dimensions of their lives.

It is also recommended that the Utah Life Skills be used to direct the desired results for student learning. The Visiting Team feels that a more definitive reference to the Utah Life Skills curriculum will enhance the development of the DRSLs by providing the indicators of student performance.

The school's action plan also reflects the goal of making adequate yearly progress in each of the Core Curricular areas. Goals have been established by each department based upon where they are and where they want to be in order to achieve AYP.

- b) *To what extent does the teaching staff work collaboratively to support the development of a curriculum that focuses on the school's desired results for student learning?*

Each department worked collaboratively in order to determine how the desired results for student learning fit within its curriculum. However, there did not seem to be a consistent context, or shared vision, in which the desired results for student

learning (DRSLs) were used. Each department seemed to infer a different meaning that did not quite fit how the DRSLs were read by the team.

It is recommended that the departments continue to collaborate, within themselves and also with one another, to revisit the desired results of student learning. The school should ensure that the curriculum taught is addressed by the DRSLs in a more specific way. There should also be a means of assessing how the curriculum is affecting the desired results for student learning through specific indicators of those outcomes.

Quality Instructional Design:

- a) *To what extent does the professional staff design and implement a variety of learning experiences that actively engage students?*

During the two-day visit, a variety of instructional practices were observed:

- (1) Technology: Teachers work with a variety of technological media, including but not limited to computers, projectors, and Elmo(s) in every class. Also, a portable lab is available for teacher share.
- (2) Character Education is a school-wide emphasis, beginning with “Words of Wisdom” and “Character Quotes” in some classrooms. Every other Friday during advisory character education is highlighted.
- (3) Block Schedules: Sixth grade instruction in math and language arts is set up in two-class-period blocks; this allows opportunities to use math manipulatives and extensions of learning experiences.
- (4) Learning competitions and class rewards in some classes keep students actively engaged.

Random students were interviewed by each of the Visiting Team members. They reported that, as they go through the school day, they experience a variety of teaching strategies. The Visiting Team observed the faculty to be dedicated, hardworking, and committed to students’ success. Designing alternative ways of assessing student work, especially as it relates to the DRSLs, will enhance student engagement and achievement.

- b) *To what extent does the professional staff employ a variety of instructional strategies to ensure the needs of different learners are met?*

All teachers are trained in Cooperative Learning Strategies to enhance students’ interaction/learning with and from each other. Some teachers are trained in Sheltered Instruction. Navajo and Ute language courses are offered.

The faculty has given serious attention to the need to recognize and meet the range of student learning styles that are encountered in every classroom. The central role

of technology and the teachers' familiarity with it was evident across the curriculum. The Visiting Team suggests that the faculty continue to collectively research and expand the use of multiple teaching strategies and instructional delivery options to meet the variety all students' needs through the use of differentiated instruction.

c) *To what extent do the professional staff and leadership provide additional opportunities which support student learning?*

- Administrators provide quality professional development opportunities for teachers to understand and use best practices.
- Remedial reading classes are offered.
- Study Skills class are offered for 8th graders.
- Language Arts and Reading are taught as separate courses.
- After-school cross-age tutoring is offered to failing/near failing students

The staff is encouraged to investigate the effectiveness of these programs in meeting student needs, as well as, whether or not all groups of students are able to take advantage of these support structures.

Quality Assessment Systems:

a) *To what extent has the staff developed classroom or school-wide assessments based on clearly articulated expectations for student achievement?*

Individual departments used different varieties of assessment. Rubrics, culminating projects, and portfolios were observed in several of the classrooms. There did seem to be an emphasis on written tests with multiple-choice answers. It is recommended that the variety of assessment increase to include more authentic classroom assessment. Open-ended questions that encompass higher-order thinking skills, as well as student-driven portfolios and student interviews, are a few suggestions.

School-wide expectations and assessments related to the desired results for student learning had not been articulated at the time of the accreditation site visit. Attention to methods of assessment linked to indicators and standards should shape the action plan item recommended by the Visiting Team as work for the near future. Using disaggregated data on individual student learning will provide the focus for the development of school-wide assessments tied to the DRSLs.

b) *To what extent are assessments of student learning developed using methods that reflect the intended purpose and performance standards?*

With the emphasis on standardized test scores as indicators of the performance standards, the means of assessment used in the classrooms do reflect that purpose. It is recommended that teachers also include more authentic assessment that shows

the knowledge and skills that students are learning, and how they are able to apply that knowledge to real-life examples.

The Visiting Team recommends collapsing the Life Skills indicators into the achievement indicators of the DRSLs as a way to facilitate the work in progress. Individualization and differentiation are taking place in some classes, and will be strengthened by expanding the conversations among staff members, parents, and students regarding who is not learning in the school and why.

- c) *To what extent are assessments designed, developed, and used in a fair and equitable manner?*

Princeton Review testing gives teachers immediate feedback regarding which test questions the students missed most often. This assists teachers in creating questions that are more relevant to the content taught.

Interviews with students reflected the sense of fairness students felt regarding individual teacher grading practices. There is no school-wide grading policy.

There is ongoing school administrative support and training for access to and use of student performance data. There is a strong desire by the administration and staff to receive and learn to use timely and accurate data in order to better serve the needs of all students. The staff understands that using data leads them to better instructional decisions.

Leadership for School Improvement:

- a) *To what extent does the school leadership promote quality instruction by fostering an academic learning climate and actively supporting teaching and learning?*

From the Visiting Team's interviews with staff members, it is evident that there is a widespread feeling of support from the administration. Comments such as "The principal gets us what we need to do our job" were frequently heard. The administration has created a climate for learning and minimized the distractions that are often evident in middle schools. The assistant principal has done an excellent job of eliminating tardies and raising average daily school attendance.

The school has established a strong and positive learning environment in which teaching and learning are actively supported. There is a culture of high expectations for students and staff. The school maintains a constant and steady focus on student learning. The depth of commitment of the school to improving student learning is clearly evident. Student and staff accomplishments are recognized.

- b) *To what extent does the school leadership employ effective decision making that is data-driven, research-based, and collaborative?*

There seems to be a high degree of ownership in the school. Staff members are honored for their opinions and consequently are involved in the school decision-making process. The administration allows the staff to problem-solve and make recommendations without its interference. Administrators have purposely removed themselves from some committees in order not to inhibit authentic results. An active School Community Council exists that is kept well informed of decisions affecting the education of children. While there seems to be a high degree of trust and collaboration, there does not seem to be evidence of data-driven decision making that is research-based. The Literacy Plus program was put in place as a result of looking at test data, however.

The Visiting Team recommends that the school use the NSSE rubrics, in addition to the study of “best practices” by all classroom teachers, to provide a common focus and language for continuing improvement efforts.

- c) *To what extent does the school leadership monitor progress in student achievement and instructional effectiveness through a comprehensive assessment system and continuous reflection?*

The administration monitors test results, but there is little evidence that major changes are being made to address the needs of students, specifically the Native American population. The development of a comprehensive assessment system linked to the DRSLs will be one of the school’s major tasks as it works to implement the recommendations of the focus groups and the Visiting Team.

- d) *To what extent does the school leadership provide skillful stewardship by ensuring management of the organization, operations, and resources of the school for a safe, efficient, and effective learning environment?*

There seems to be a safe school environment for learning. The administration works hard, as mentioned above, to ensure a school climate where learning can take place with as few interruptions as possible.

Parents, students, and staff repeatedly commended the school’s leadership for improving the school’s climate and culture. School-wide policies and operational procedures are consistent with the school’s beliefs and mission, and are designed to support student learning. The allocation and use of resources are aligned with school goals.

- e) *To what extent does the school leadership make decisions related to the allocation and use of resources which align with the school goals, the achievement of the DRSLs, and school improvement efforts?*

The DRSLs do not seem to drive decisions that are made in the school at this time. More time needs to be spent on refining and communicating the DRSLs to the

entire staff, and the DRSLs need to drive decisions that are made for school improvement.

The school leadership is committed to putting into place a process for ensuring the allocation and use of resources that are aligned with the school goals or the achievement of the DRSLs. The leadership has fostered a learning community of adults that emulates the school's efforts to establish a learning environment for students in the classroom.

- f) *To what extent does the school leadership empower the school community and encourage commitment, participation, collaboration, and shared responsibility for student learning?*

The Visiting Team found that the administration does a commendable job in this area. In a community with the diverse demographics that Blanding has, it is a difficult task that will require ongoing effort. Evidence exists of an active Community Council with good representation of the various subgroups that are present in the community. It is important to keep these groups consistently involved in the school/community process.

There is strong evidence that the school has created and sustained a learning environment for students that nurtures a sense of caring and belonging. The Visiting Team encourages the staff to continue its efforts to collaborate across departments to foster collegiality, and to provide cross-curricular connections for students.

Community Building:

- a) *To what extent does the school foster community building and working relationships within the school?*

After meeting with department chairs, focus group chairs, and individual staff and faculty members, it is apparent that the school is developing a climate of community that is reflected in working relationships within the school. In a separate meeting with student leaders, it was apparent that they viewed themselves as a valued part of the school improvement process. (However, it would have been useful to have a larger representation of Native American students in this discussion. There were approximately 15 students in the meeting; only one was Native American. This number does not adequately represent the 49 percent Native American population at the school.)

The meeting with the Community Council provided insight into the community's perception of its participation in the process. Comments from Community Council members were positive: "We had ownership, this was a positive change"; "We developed common goals for students"; "We were comfortable being part of the

process.” This speaks well of the process at the school—it was inclusive and collaborative.

- b) *To what extent does the school extend the school community through collaborative networks that support student learning?*

The school is making an effort to do this. Given the academic performance of Native American students in general, there need to be continued efforts to involve Native American parents in the school. That sense of community and collaboration has not been reached.

The school cites a variety of programs and practices that support student learning beyond the regular program and school day.

Culture of Continuous Improvement and Learning:

- a) *To what extent does the school build skills and the capacity for improvement through comprehensive and ongoing professional development programs focused on the school's goals for improvement?*

The staff members are actively involved in professional development based on their own needs and desires. The Visiting Team suggests that staff development efforts become more focused on the DRSLs. The faculty should continue to look at formal as well as informal assessments to collect data to verify that teaching strategies assure student learning.

- b) *To what extent does the school create conditions that support productive change and continuous improvement?*

It was evident to the Visiting Team that the leadership at the school fully supports the faculty, and the faculty appears to fully support the leadership. There is a strong desire to do what is best for students. The departments report in their study that there is a need to develop a clearer focus on the DRSLs as a means to improve student learning. Additionally, they acknowledge a need to use more data-driven, research-based information to dictate the school's direction. The staff should consider implementing these ideas into school action planning.

CHAPTER 4: NORTHWEST ASSOCIATION OF ACCREDITED SCHOOLS (NAAS) STANDARDS I-XI

Albert R. Lyman Middle School applied for and received NAAS accreditation in 2001. Most Utah public junior high/middle schools are not accredited through NAAS, only by the USOE—it is their choice to join NAAS or not.

Standard I – Educational Program

This standard is met. Albert R. Lyman Middle School's instructional and organizational practices, as well as its policies and procedures, support the desired results for student learning and prepare students to succeed in a culturally diverse, democratic society.

Standard II – Student Personnel Services

This standard is met. Student personnel services are designed to give systematic assistance to students. The assigned personnel for guidance includes a minimum of one full-time person for each 400 students enrolled.

Standard III – School Plant and Equipment

This standard is met. The school plant provides for a variety of instructional activities and programs and incorporates aesthetic features that contribute to a positive educational atmosphere.

Standard IV – Library Media Program

This standard is met. The school library media program is a primary resource for literacy, information, and curriculum support. A certified library media teacher provides instruction, resources, and activities to promote independent use of ideas and information.

Standard V – Records

This standard is met. Student records are maintained, handled, and protected in the best interests of students and parents. Students and parents have the right to access personal student records and are ensured the privacy of such, as guaranteed by federal legislation.

Standard VI – School Improvement (This is addressed in the self-study.)

This standard is met. The school improvement plan focuses on the total school rather than each of the separate components within the school.

Standard VII – Preparation of Personnel

This standard is met. All professional personnel are in compliance with the licensing requirements of the state of Utah and are properly endorsed for the subjects they are assigned.

Standard VIII – Administration

This standard is met. The administration of Albert R. Lyman Middle School provides educational leadership, supervises and coordinates programs, and carries out the necessary administrative procedures.

Standard IX – Teacher Load

This standard is met. The total number of students instructed by any one teacher in any one grading period does not exceed numbers set by the Utah State Office of Education and/or Northwest.

Standard X – Activities

This standard is met. Albert R. Lyman Middle School supports a range of activities that supplement the basic instructional program by providing additional interests and experiences for learning to take place.

Standard XI – Business Practices

This standard is met. The school is financially responsible. Proper budgetary procedures and generally accepted accounting principles are followed for all school funds. The school's advertising and promotional literature are completely truthful and ethical.

CHAPTER 5: SCHOOL IMPROVEMENT EFFORTS – ACTION PLAN

- a) *To what extent is the school-wide action plan adequate in addressing the critical areas for follow-up?*

The action plan addresses specific areas for follow-up. There are specific dates by which these plans must be completed, and there are specific people who are in charge of following up on the plans. The DRSLs, however, are not sufficiently addressed in the action plan.

- b) *To what extent is there sufficient commitment to the action plan, school-wide and system-wide?*

It was evident to the Visiting Team that the leadership team and administration, as well as many members of the teaching staff, share a strong commitment to the action plans.

However, it was also apparent that some of the faculty members are not fully committed to addressing the school's DRSLs and recognizing the impact that implementing the DRSLs will have for classroom instruction and assessment.

The action plans need to incorporate a focus for their impact on the DRSLs. The administration and leadership team will need to secure the commitment of the staff to attending to the DRSLs before they proceed to implement the action plans and Visiting Team recommendations.

- c) *How sound does the follow-up process that the school intends to use for monitoring the accomplishments of the school-wide action plan appear to be?*

The action plans currently do not go much beyond the need for monitoring the effectiveness of the school's improvement plan. In order to evaluate their effectiveness, the leadership still needs to identify what data/evidence should be collected and periodically analyzed by the team/faculty. The Visiting Team suggests incremental benchmarks and analyses of how the data from the findings affected instructional strategies, instructional delivery, and curriculum content.

CHAPTER 6: MAJOR COMMENDATIONS AND RECOMMENDATIONS OF THE VISITING TEAM

Commendations:

- Albert R. Lyman Middle School is commended for applying and meeting the rigorous standards for accreditation of the Northwest Association of Accredited Schools, the regional accrediting body of which Utah is a member. Most Utah middle level schools do not seek this level of accreditation. This action reflects the school's dedication to student achievement and school improvement.
- The Visiting Team commends Albert R. Lyman Middle School for creating an inviting school, as demonstrated by a welcoming atmosphere and happy students. Statements from students included "Everyone is friendly," and "Everyone knows everyone." Students "love classes where they have a voice and can debate issues." Students also expressed appreciation for the after-school tutoring program.

- The Visiting Team commend the parents and their input regarding the work that the Albert R. Lyman staff has done to narrow down all of the problems, programs, etc. to make them seem “do-able”
- The Visiting Team commends the staff and administration for their conscious and diligent efforts in creating a positive culture and climate conducive to teaching and learning. This is a wonderful school. The kids are friendly and feel safe. The teachers care about their students and will go any length to help them develop. Responsibility is evident on both sides of the board. Students are given greater responsibility to do their work on time with good quality. The staff feels supported by the administration and is happy to work here.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff members on their sincere effort to conduct a candid self- study of the school and to use this process to identify needed improvement efforts on behalf of the students and parents they serve.
- The Visiting Team commends the staff and administration for continued efforts in identifying the needs of students, and in creating a positive community image for Lyman Middle School. This image includes providing a safe learning environment, holding high expectations for student learning, and having a staff characterized by caring educators willing to do whatever is necessary to help students succeed. Students were observed to be enthusiastic and motivated to participate in the school activities. The faculty members learned much about themselves in the accreditation process, and see the need for further study to improve the learning environment.

The Visiting Team commends the administration for its support of the staff, and for its willingness to share the leadership of the school with all the stakeholders.

Recommendations:

The Visiting Team is in substantial agreement with the myriad of recommendations that come out of the departmental and focus group analyses and the goals of the action plans. These recommendations are indicative of the high quality of the self-study effort and the integrity of the processes in working to develop the school improvement plans. The hope is to provide some focus for the school’s improvement processes and link them to attainable results by virtue of the following recommendations.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the action plan include a timeline of long- and short-term goals, with realistic goals and dates for implementation and completion. The plan ought to be reviewed and revised as needed to reflect the results of continuous data collection and analysis, as well as focus groups. The action plan should also include a professional development component that would address “best practices,” research, and data-driven strategies.

- The Visiting Team recommends that the school consider a Native American representative/ombudsperson to serve in student government. It might be useful to have student government leaders represent, in part, geographic areas of the student population so that these students are more fully represented and participating. Perhaps new programs should be developed to more fully involve the Native American students in the school.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Albert R. Lyman Middle School continue to seek innovative ways of increasing opportunities for teachers to collaborate, share best practices, and implement the school's action plans. The school needs to engage the whole staff in collaborative inquiry with regard to the school's DRSLs. This would include: (1) working to increase school-wide understanding of the purposes for and criteria used in selecting the DRSLs, and (2) posting the DRSLs as expectations in every classroom.
- In acknowledging the degree of progress being made and work already in progress, as well as the quality of the recommendations from the focus group reports, the Visiting Team recommends that the faculty collectively study best practices and research in the teaching and assessing of the school's DRSLs, identify indicators, and establish the standards for students' demonstration of the DRSLs.
- The Visiting Team recommends that Albert R. Lyman Middle School continue to develop its self-study document by (1) collecting additional data (disaggregating and analyzing student data) and (2) aligning the action plans to address the findings resulting from the profile and departmental analyses of how well students are meeting the desired results for student learning.